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Panel Investigates Rep. Beard for Disclosure on Soviet

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 25 — Representative Robin L. Beard, Republican of Tennessee, is being investigated by the House Armed Services Committee for disclosing information last week that was described by the White House as having "possible grave consequences for national security."

In a highly unusual action, Representative Melvin Price, chairman of the committee, ordered a subcommittee to determine how Mr. Beard, a member of the committee, might have obtained information about alleged Soviet violations of the spirit of negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union to limit strategic arms. The investigation was requested by Representative Robert Carr, Democrat of Michigan, who is also a member of the committee.

Mr. Beard, in an interview, denied any impropriety.

"They could have stopped me from issuing the release simply by telling me that the information was classified," Mr. Beard said.

Beard Says Probe a Diversion

Mr. Beard accused the Administration of using its allies on Capitol Hill to press for an investigation against him. He called it an effort to "divert attention from the real issue involved here: Soviet violations of the strategic arms treaty."

The inquiry could prompt a broad and acrimonious debate between Democrats and Republicans over the alleged disclosure of highly sensitive national security

information for partisan purposes.

In the last three weeks members of the Carter Administration and members of Ronald Reagan's campaign staff have exchanged accusations concerning the disclosure of information about the secret effort to develop technology to make aircraft and missiles capable of avoiding radar detection. The House Armed Services Committee is investigating whether Administration officials disclosed the information about the Stealth program for partisan purposes.

One Republican Congressional staff member, infuriated by word of the House panel's investigation of Mr. Beard, said today that Republicans would respond by continuing to highlight what they call the Administration's "abuse and misuse of intelligence information."

At issue is a press release issued last week by Mr. Beard in which he charged that Moscow in July "conducted an exercise over a five-day period in which they simulated the reloading of 25 to 40 SS-18 missile silos."

Rapid reloading of missile silos is prohibited under the terms of the 1979 strategic arms treaty. Although the treaty has not been ratified, both sides had indicated they were prepared to observe its terms.

Administration officials denied that there had been any violation of the treaty and said Mr. Beard's information was inaccurate.

Privately, senior Administration and intelligence officials were stunned and deeply concerned about the press release. One intelligence official noted that reliable information about Soviet activities in this area had only recently become obtainable.

Meanwhile, Representative Carr, having been provided with classified information along with several other Armed Services Committee members in a private briefing, said he was infuriated by Mr. Beard's press release.

Mr. Price, in a letter dated Sept. 24, informed Mr. Carr that he had asked Representative Samuel S. Stratton, Democrat of New York, chairman of the Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations, to "hold a hearing promptly on this matter."